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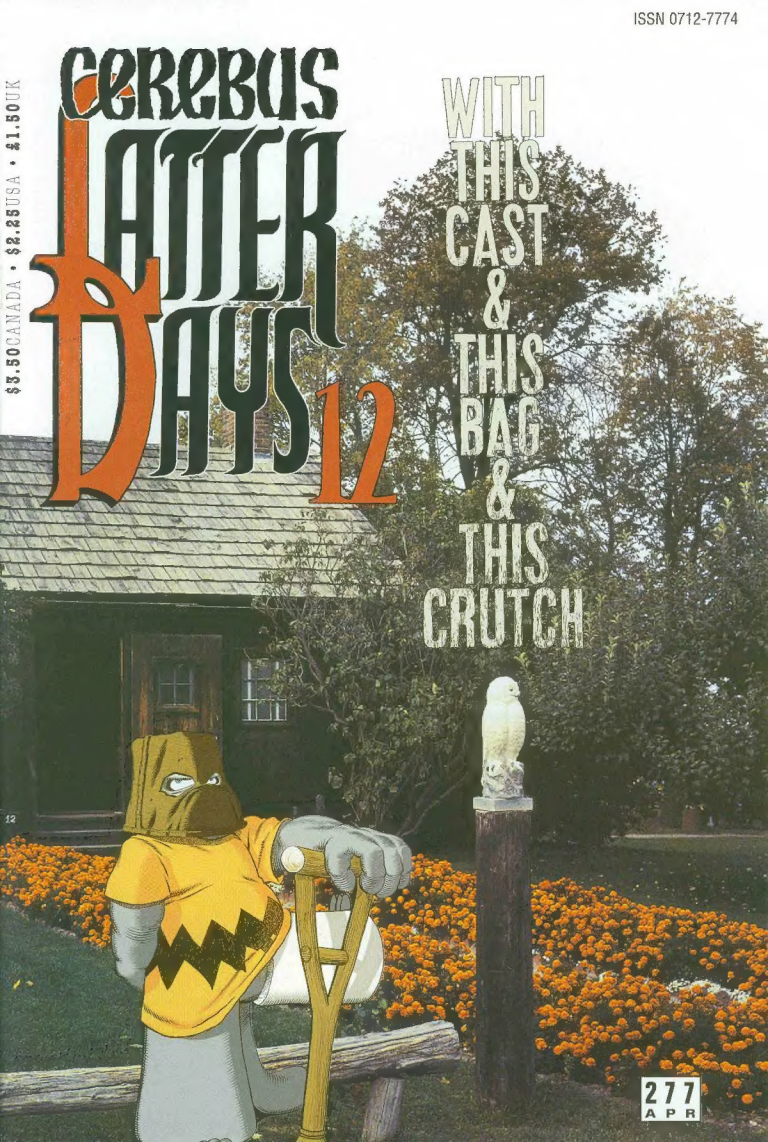
CEREBUS LATTER DAYS 12

WITH THIS CAST & THIS BAG & THIS CRUTCH



277
APR

CEREBUS
NO. 277 APRIL 2002

DEAR MR. SIM

Dave Sim
Aardvark-Vanaheim, Inc.
P.O. Box 1674
Station C
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 4R2

Dear Mr. Sim,

First, I'd like to apologize for the extreme delay in getting back to you. Between work and college, the holidays, the girlfriend, etc., and a healthy ability to procrastinate, I find that I've acted in an ill-mannered and rude way. I have *never* been a timely correspondent.

I'd like to thank you for the adaptation of my material, the mention of it in the comic itself, and the more than generous cheque. I was shocked the day I received the initial letter, and I remain pleasantly surprised at the way things have turned out. I am no longer (nor have I been for quite some time) pursuing the *Kilhook* project, so it's nice to see you made some use out of it. Also, for a fan-boy (even though a much older one, at this point) it's amazing to see my name on the inside front cover, and to know I contributed in some small way to *Cerebus*.

I apologize again for taking so long to respond. I received a phone call today from the *Comics Journal*, and the guy seemed to be trying to get me to say something negative about either the way you adapted my material or the way you went about it. I told him exactly what I have said above: that it was an honor, a pleasant surprise, and that I have not done anything myself with the *Kilhook* project.

I know you said in your initial letter to notify you of my current whereabouts. I'll be, once again at my parent's address until the fall (when I graduate) if that is of any service to you.

Thank you again: for the honorable mention, the cheque, the tracings - oh, and yes, I received the free issues you sent me; again, that was more than generous.

Sincerely,

Nicholas C Zivkovic

Nick Zivkovic

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Creator, Writer
Characters/
pencil & ink,
mechanical tones,
lettering

GERHARD
Background
Artist/pencil & ink

CHRIS VERHOEVEN
Cover Technician

KEN SIM
Cover Photo

LATTER DAYS
•
PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 266
and 267)
•
BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 268 to
288)
•
BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 289 to
300)

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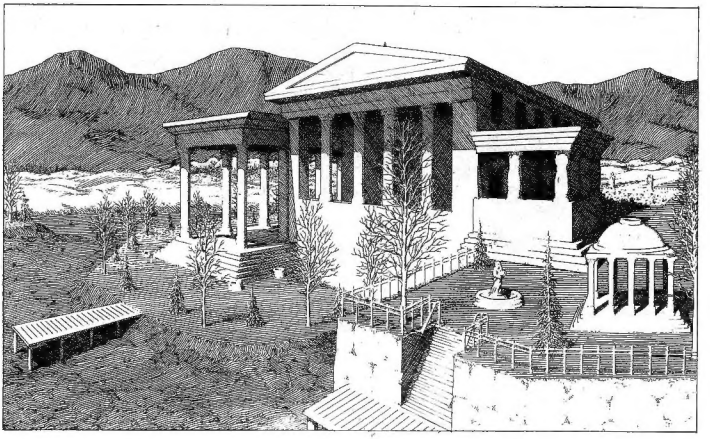
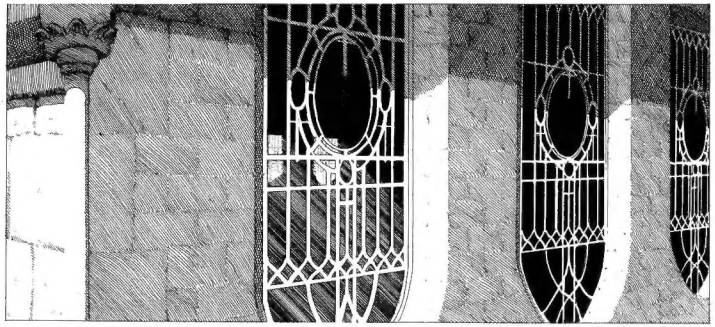
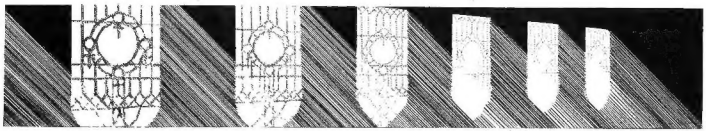


31: And so came Spore
and ye Spore Wagon and
ye Spore's Spores vnto the
Communitie Centre which
wast nearest vnto the place
where McSpahn didst
falter.
32: And Spore spake vnto
Spore's Spores saying,
Goe ye foorth abroad vnto
every billage and hamlet
and towne which is
serued by this
Communitie Centre.
33: And tell euery man and
euery woman that Todd
"Far Lane" McSpahn who
didst slaughter ye Mothers
in their thousands hast
by the worde of Cerebvs
been supplanted by ye
King of All Demons
which is called Spore.

34: Spore who is ye goode
husband and true of ye
Queen of All Demons and
Father to ye Daughters of
All Demons which hatched
foorth from ye
Egges of All Demons
within the Sanctvarie,
as wast spoken
of aforetimes by
ye Prophet Ricke.
35: And speake furthermore
vnto them, saying
that Spore and his Lovelie Wife
and his Lovelie Daughters
haue a Lovelie Gifte
for each of ye Mothers
of this land which ye Mothers
shal receiue without coste or
obligation ifsobe they come with
their sonnes and their husbands
unto this Communitie Centre
by noone todaie.

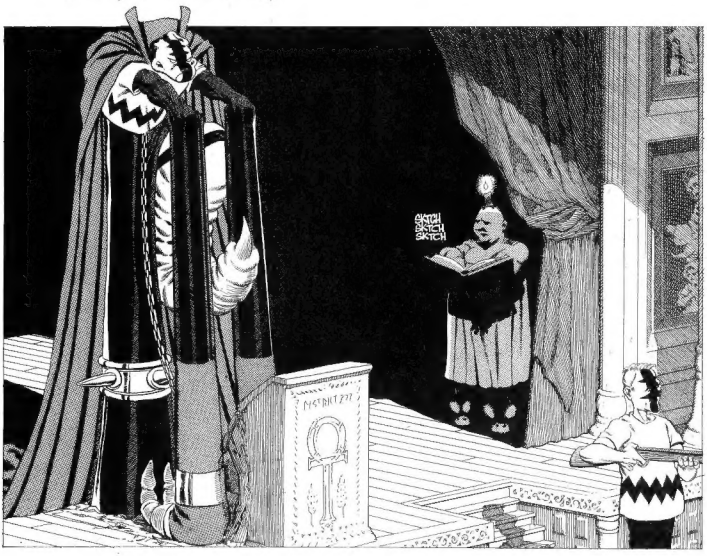
36: And Spore's Spores
didst as Spore badest them,
so didst they; going foorth
vnto euery village &
euery hamlet & euery
towne which were
serued by the
Communitie Centre.
37: And Spore's Spores
didst bring foorth all
of the men & all of the
women & all of the
husbands & all of the
wiues & all of the fathers
& all of the mothers and
brought them vnto
the Communitie Centre.
38: And when all the hoste
of them were come within the
Communitie Centre
39: (And when all the babies
and children) (which Spore
badest not to come vnto him)
(were locked up in an
adjoining room with bins
of sugar and many spoones)



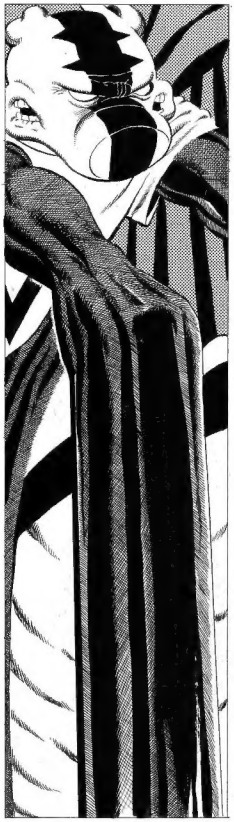


40: Then Spore spake
vnto ye Spores saying,
Lock all ye doores,
Spores.
41: And when all ye doores
were locked, Spore spake
vnto ye men & ye husbands
& ye fathers from the platforme
saying
42: This daie is the King of
All Demons and his Spores
come vnto thee in the Name
of Cerebvs & of the Sanctvarie
& of the Seate of Trueth.

43: That all might be fulfilled
according to the worde of the
Prophet Ricke in bringing
an end to this Age which hath
overturned all righteousnesse
after the manner of the deuill &
the viper & the scorpion.
44: Here vpon this platforme
ye Spores shal bring foorth before
you, one by one, each woman
of thy villages & thy hamlets
& thy townes.



45: If iudging thou doest iudge her to bee an Angel (or euen a woman onely) thou shalt not raise thy hande.
46: If iudging thou doest iudge her to be a deuill or a uiper or a scorpion then thou shalt raise thy hande.
47: If the greater number of thee iudgest her to bee an Angel (or euen a woman onely) then she shal liue.
48: If the greater number of thee iudgest her to bee a deuill or a uiper or a scorpion then one of Spore's Spores wilt blowe her head off.



49: And this shalbe vnto all of the Mothers of this lande (which are Angels or women onely) and vnto the men of this lande the Lovelie Gifte which wast spoken of; that this land bee no more vexed & troubled by deuills & uipers & scorpions hauing the aspect of women.

WHAT.
WHAT IF THE VOTE ENDS IN A TIE?
IF THE VOTE IS A TIE...
...THE WOMAN SHALL DIE.
BUSTER SAYS...
WHEN IT COMES TO DEVILS AND VIPERS AND SCORPIONS...
GULP
...MAN SORRY.
I GOTTA SEE DA KING O' ALL-DEMONS! POINT.
YEAH - AFTER ALL - "A OUNCE O' PREVENTION IS WORTH A POUND O' CURE."
AND REMEMBER...
YOU CAN ALWAYS MAKE MORE WOMEN.
A BITCH IN TIME SLAYS NINE.
BOY - PAT'S TRUE.
YEAH - IT'S NOT LIKE DERESS SUM SECRET RECIPE 'R NUTTIN'...
IT HAPPENS HALF DA TIME NO MATTUH WHUT.

50: And so it wast done as was spoken of by Spore vnto the men of that place;

51: From the register of that Communitie Center the women were called foorth by name and led vpon the platforme, one by one, so that the men might vote whether they bee Angels (or women onely) or whether they bee deuills or vipers or scorpions hauing the aspect of women.

MUDDY TABERNAC!
JULIE... DU...? PLOTTEE IS IT?
PSST! SPORE. SHOULD WE PUT UP CUAH HAND IF IT MAKES US FEEL SICK JUST T' LOOK AT HER?
MM-M. NAY. ONLY IF YOU THINK SHE'S A DEVIL OR A VIPER OR A SCORPION.
CHHHH.
OKAY!
MARCIE D'ANGELA
CWAH HERE MARCIE!
PUT YOOAH HAND DOWN-- IT LOOKS LIKE YOOAH VOTEIN AGAINST HER
PUSS! NOBUDDY'D VOTE AGAINST MARCIE
?
DAMS TRUE!
NAWFICK O'HARA?
AW, SHOOT. NOT ENOUGH VOTES TO "WHACK" NAWFICK?
I KNOW. DEE DON'T SEEM RIGHT SOMEHOW.
LYDIA. KROTCHMOCKER.
LET GO ME JOSEPH HASKING
YOU LITTLE FAGGOT
THE BEST PART O' YOU RAN DOWN Y'MUDDAH'S LEG!
YOU T'INK I'M AHRAID O' YOU?

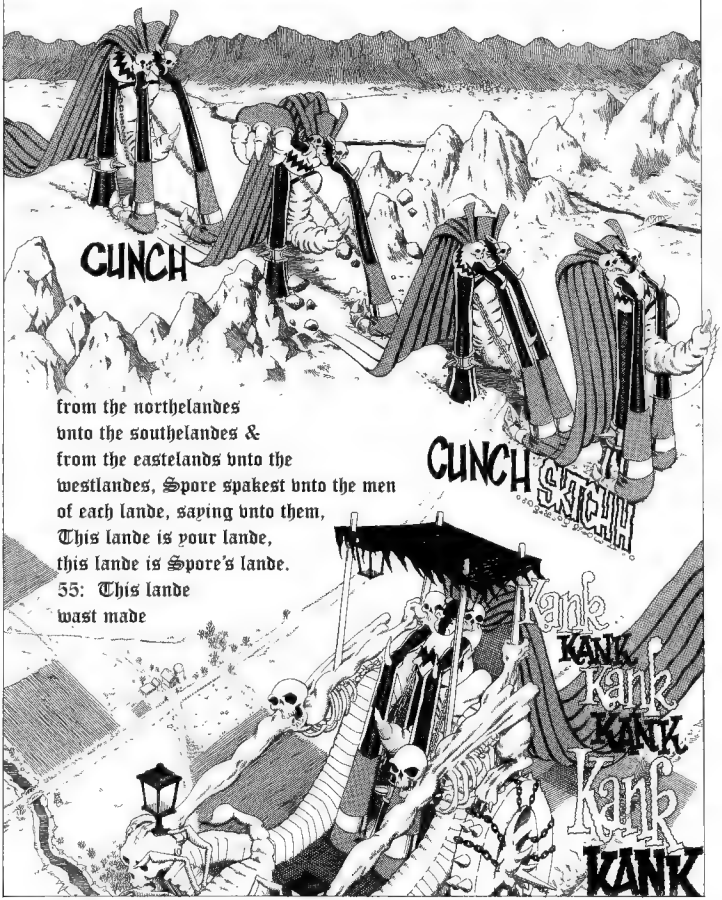
YOU T'INK I'M AFRAID O' ANY O' YOU?
LEG GO. I SAID
SCRATCH
BIIIG. BRAAVE. MEN HANH?!
WIT' Y' BIIIIIIG PENIS SUB-STUH- TOOTS
CAN'T GEDDIT UP HANH?
SO YOU GOTTA GIT A BIIIIIIIIG GUN HANH?!
YOU KNOW WHUT YOU ARE? YOU ARE AWL NUTTIN' BUT A BUNCH O'
KA-K
N
HEY.
SNIFF
HEY, PETEY! DON'T TAKE IT SO HARD!
IT HADTA BE DONE PETEY.
IT'S NOT YOOAH FAULT DAT YOOAH MUDDAH JOINED OUT T'BE A DEVIL, A VIPAH AND/OR A SCORPEEN.
IT COULDA HAPPENED TA ANY ONE O' US.
HE'S RIGHT, PETEY...
IT COULDA HAPPENED TA ANY ONE O' US...

52: And when that Communitie Center and that lande was cleansed of all deuills & vipers & scorpions, then didst Spore and ye Spore Wagon and ye Spore's Spores proceede vnto an other Communitie Center and an other lande.

AN' ONE UPPAH NAME I CAN'T READ ON ACCOUNTA DA REGISTRAR RUNNED OUTTA ROOM INNA "REMARKIED" NAME BOX SO DAT DA LAST NAME IS UNBELIEVABLY TINY.
"PORTENT OR Y" MAYBE?
DA POINT IS MOOT. SOLLY
YEAH, SOLLY...
DA POINT IS MOOT.
NEXT?
BBB

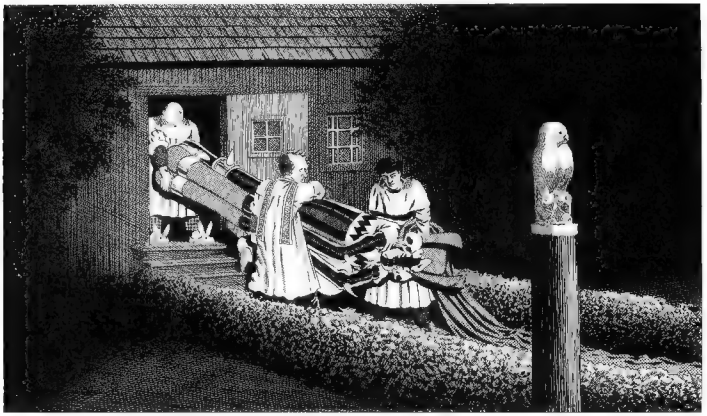
53: And from thence didst Spore and ye Spore Wagon and ye Spore's Spores proceede vnto ye next Communitie Center and ye next lande, cleansing that Communitie Center and that lande of all deuills & vipers & scorpions.

54: For fortie daies and fortie nights Spore and ye Spore Wagon and ye Spore's Spores didst prevail over all the Communitie Centers and all the landes of Estarcion,



from the northelandes
vnto the southelandes &
from the eastelands vnto the
westlandes, Spore spakest vnto the men
of each lande, saying vnto them,
This lande is your lande,
this lande is Spore's lande.
55: This lande
wast made

56: And it came to passe on the fortieth night that as the Three Wise Fellowes were inserting Spore into his lodgings (for it wast the habit of the Three Wise Fellowes that they wouldst insert Spore into his lodgings each night and withdrawe Spore from his lodgings each morning) Spore spake vnto them saying:



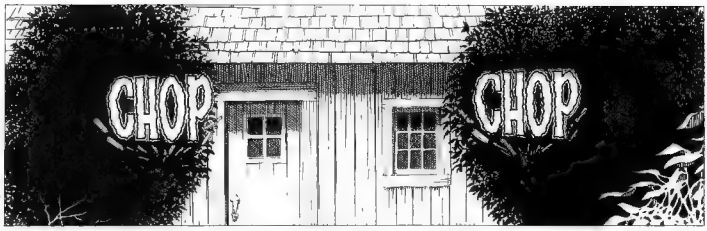
57: Come thou not vnto Spore tomorrow morning for the withdrawing of him from his lodgings. Neither come thou the next daie nor the thirde daie. And the Three Wise Fellowes were sorely vexed and troubled and didst inqvire vnto Spore as to the meaning of his wordes and Spore spake vnto them saying:

58: Spores time on this earth waxes short, for each Communitie Center and each lande hast bene purged of all deuills and all vipers and all scorpions hauing the aspect of women and the age which hath ouerturned al righteousnesse is at an ende. And so Spore must returne unto the Pitt from whence he came that Cerebus might returne unto thee and govern ouer thee in the name of the Sanctvarie and the name of the Seate of Trueth.

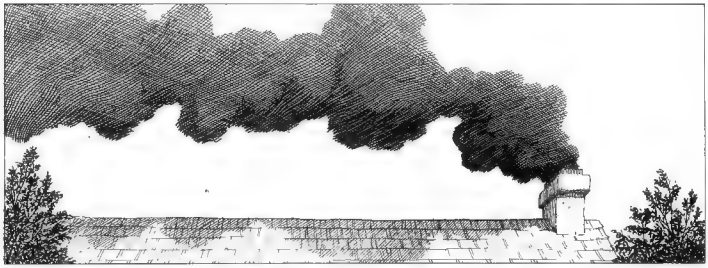
59: And the Three Wise Fellowes wept sore at the wordes of Spore and spake vnto him saying But, but, but.

60: And Spore answered vnto them saying, No buts. Once each year shalt thou become again Spore's Spores and travel from Communitie Center vnto Communitie Center summoning al the men and al the women of each lande that the men might iudge each woman whether shee bee an Angel (or a woman onely) or a deuill or a uiper or a scorpion. For tho the age of unrighteousnesse bee at an ende, stil any Angel or any woman can go bad (like vnto rotten fruite) and devills and uipers and scorpions can springe up in the midst of thee. Swearest thou vnto Spore that thou shalt doe this in remembrance of him lest Spore come back from the Pitt and give vnto thee the dreaded Three-Way Smack vpon thy faces.

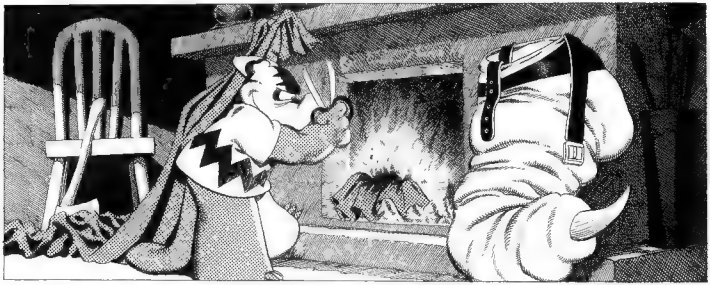
61: And the Three Wise Fellowes didst swear vnto Spore and with much lament didst insert Spore into his lodgings and with heavie hearts didst they then returne vnto their owne place.

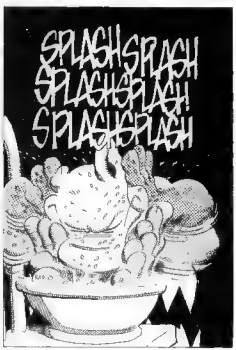


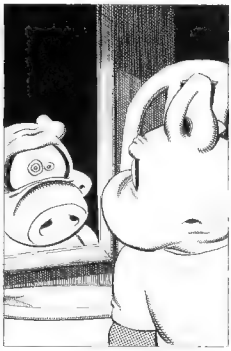
62: And ye nexte date wast heard from the lodgings ye sounde of chopping. And the Three Wise Fellowes took counsel among themselves saying, It is because Spore doeth choppe his way back into ye Pitt.



63: And the thirde date there wast seen from the chimney of ye lodgings billowes of thicke blacke smoke. And the Three Wise Fellowes took counsel among themselves saying, It looketh as if he hath made it.







Chapter the Second

THIS WAS THE FIRST ALTARPIECE THAT KOSHIE DID **AFTER** THE **GREAT ALIGNMENT** WHICH THE **CEREBITES** (FORMERLY KNOWN AS **SPORE'S SPORES**) VOTED HAD TAKEN PLACE AS SOON AS CEREBRUS AND RETURNED FROM THE **PIT** (CEREBRUS 2::1). RIGHT. AS YOU CAN **SEE**: IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR KOSHIE'S **BUMBO'S a la MODEE** DREAMS TO COME TRUE. THE MODEL'S NAME WAS **ELLIE** (SOMETHING-OR OTHER. **FRAGELLICA? FRAGETTIKA?** SOMETHING LIKE THAT). **NOW!** JUST **LOOK** AT THE PICTURE AND **ASK** YOURSELF: "OKAY, SO WHAT IS THE **POINT** OF THIS PICTURE?" AND THE ANSWER, OF COURSE, IS THAT **ELLIE WHAT'S-HER-NAME'S AMAZING ASS** IS THE **POINT** OF THIS PICTURE... . JUST **LOOK** AT THE PICTURE... ..**TRY** TO ..LOOK AT THE PART WHERE CEREBRUS IS FLOATING ABOVE THE STEPS WITH THE BAG OVER HIS HEAD HOLDING UP HIS CRUTCH... ...NOW **TRY** TO LOOK AT KOSHIE'S SELF-PORTRAIT, WRITHING IN **YE BOOKES OF CEREBRUS**... ...WHAT HAPPENED... ...YOUR EYE IS DRAWN DOWN, DOWN (RESISTING... BARELY... ...ON THIS **HAIR** OF "*THE ANGEL ASTONIED AT THE PROMISE OF A HOUSE*"... ..DRIFTING BLOODWAY ALONG THE CURVE OF THE **BACK** OF "*THE ANGEL ASTONIED AT THE PROMISE OF A HOUSE*".) ...UNTIL **BAM!** ...YOUR EYE HITS **ELLIE WHAT'S-HER-NAME'S AMAZING ASS**... AT **WHICH** POINT YOU ASK YOURSELF, "SELF, WHY IS CEREBRUS THE ONLY ONE IN THE PICTURE WITH **CLOTHES** ON?" AND THEN YOU REALIZE THE **ANSWER** TO YOUR QUESTION IS: "WHO **CARES? LOOK. AT THAT. AMAZING. ASS!**"

NYUCK NYUK NYUK BACK 2 ANIM'S

THE **ACTUAL** ANSWER? WELL, YOU JUST HAVE TO LOOK AT THE WAY THE "**ANGEL**" FIGURE AND THE "**KOSHIE**" FIGURE ARE **POSED**... JUST LOOK AT WHERE THE "**ANGEL'S**" HANDS ARE HOLDING ONTO "**KOSHIE'S**" LEGS... ...**NOW**. PICTURE SPENDING EIGHT TO TEN **WEEKS** LIKE THAT... **ALL DAY. STARING** AT **ELLIE WHAT'S-HER-NAME'S AMAZING ASS** IN A FULL-LENGTH MIRROR. KNOWING HOW **FAST** KOSHIE COULD PAINT, THE ACTUAL **PAINTING** PROBABLY TOOK EIGHT TO TEN **DAYS**... AS FOR THE **REST** OF THE EIGHT TO TEN **WEEKS**? WELL... **YOU** FIGURE IT OUT

WOOPWOOPWOOPWOOP 2 ANIM'S

MOSHIE WOULD'VE **MURDERED** HIM IF HE EVER FOUND OUT... ...BUT HE NEVER DID. ANY TIME THE SENTRIES SPOTTED MOSHIE COMING UP THE TWO-MILE ROAD TO KOSHIE'S STRONGHOLD THEY'D SIGNAL UP THE HILL AND - BY THE TIME MOSHIE GOT THERE - ELLIE AND EVERYBODY ELSE WOULD HAVE THEIR CLOTHES ON, ALL THE LIQUOR WOULD'VE BEEN LOADED ONTO THE DUMBWAITER (NOT **ME**, MOSHIE'D ALWAYS SAY, "IT'S **UPDAH** DUMBWAITAH!") (MUNCHMUNCHMUNCH) LOWERED INTO THE BASEMENT AND — WHEN MOSHIE WOULD WANDER IN — EVERYBODY'D BE SITTING AROUND SIPPING THEIR **SUGGY-FRAGGY TEA** AND WATCHING KOSHIE PAINTING A BUNCH OF *CHRYSANTHEMUMUMUMUMS*

"WHY, MOSHIE! WHUT A UNEXPECTED SUH-PROOZE!"

OF MOSHIE EVER WONDERED WHY KOSHIE WAS **STILL** PAINTING THE **SAME** *CHRYSANTHEMUMUMUMUMS* **EVERY** TIME HE CAME FOR A VISIT, HE NEVER **SAID** ANYTHING.)

SAME WITH THE **SANCTUARIES**. ANYTIME THEY SAW MOSHIE COMING, THEY'D PULL A CORD AND SOME NICE TAPESTRY ... WITH EVERYONE FULLY DRESSED ... WOULD ROLL DOWN AND COVER ELLIE WHAT'S-HER-NAME'S AMAZING ASS (OR WHOEVER ELSE'S AMAZING WHATEVER) UNTIL MOSHIE LEFT... AND THEN THEY'D ROLL IT BACK UP AGAIN.

DOES IT MATTER THAT CEREBRUS WASN'T FLOATING ABOVE THE STEPS? THAT KOSHIE DIDN'T LOOK REMOTELY **LIKE** THAT? THAT THERE **WEREN'T** ANY WOMEN OUT FRONT OF THE LODGINGS THAT MORN'NG? ...NAH... AS KOSHIE USED TO TELL THE FELLAS

"ALWAYS REMEMBUH DAT **GOD** MADE **ELLIE WHAT'S-HER-NAME'S AMAIZEEN' ASS** AN' IT WUZ **TWICET** AS AMAZEEN' IN **POYSIN** AS IT IS IN DAT 'ANGEL ASTONIED AT DA PROMISE OF A HOUSE **PAIN'EEN.**'"
AND WHEN THEY HEARD **THAT**, YOU BETTUH BELIEVE THE BONS WOULD GET RIGHT DOWN ON THEIR KNEES AND START **PRAYING.**

And ye next morning

Cerebvs came foorth vnto ye Cerebites, speaking vnto them & saying, Now hast Spore retvrned vnto ye Pitt and Cerebvs hast retvrned vnto thee from ye Pitt that hee might govern over thee in wisdome and in trueth, in the name of ye Sanctvarie & the name of ye Seate of Trueth.

2: Now the hoste of thee shal fulfil the worde of ye Prophet Ricke which wast spoken vnto thee aforetimes in ye matter of ye building up of ye houses and ye stronge holdes and ye Sanctvaries: build ye up houses for thine Angels & for thy women. Build ye up stronge holdes for thy selves. And build yee up Sanctvaries wherein those whose faithe is Greatest shal recite ye worde of Ricke & ye worde of Cerebvs daie & night in the eares of al men whose spirit doeth stirre them up to come vnto the Sanctvarie & to listen.

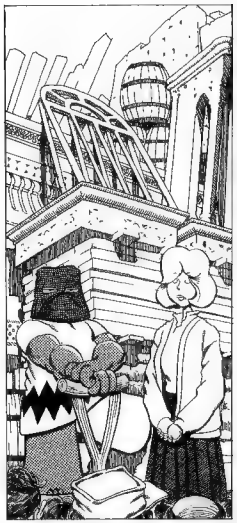
3: First thou shalt build up the Greatest of Houses vnto those (whome thou doest agree) art the Greatest among thine Angels: houses with manie baie windowes & breakfast nooks & cathedral ceilings & sky lightes & ye sunken liuing roome with ye large fireplace & ye panoramic floore to ye ceiling picture windowes & ye dressing roome & ye vanitie table with ye make-up mirror and ye Closets of Ye Walking In & Ye Walking Out & ye built-in shoe rackes (manie, manie built-in shoe rackes) & ye wine cellar with ye bottles of ye drie white wine (manie, manie bottles of ye drie white wine) and ye large vegetable crisper & ye huge kitchen (ye huge, huge kitchen) with ye large spice racke on ye walle with manie matching adorable little hande-blowne glasse bottles of ye spices & ye matching adorable hande-carued liddes & with ye huge stoue built in vnto ye islande for ye chopping of ye vegetables & with ye butchers blocke alongside for ye chopping of ye meat & before it seueral fine carued stooles where the Angels best girl friends might sit and sippe ye white wine whilst the Angel doest trie out her new recipe & ye Pantrie of Ye Walking In and Ye Walking Out with matching hand-carued bins of inlaid woode for ye flour & ye sugar & ye oates & ye tea bagges & ye loose tea & ye fresh roasted almonds & ye fresh roasted cashewes & ye white chocolate & ye darke chocolate & ye screened-in sunne porche and ye vaulted ceilinged conservatorie

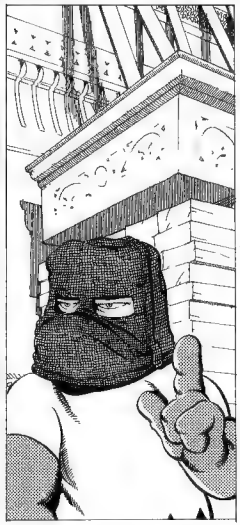
& ye sewing roome with ye cedar chests full of fine bolts of ye fine clothe in natural fabrics in manie colours & diuerse patterns & ye cozy chaire with ye cozy foote stoole & ye drapes in ye same exact fabric & ye manie guest roomes with ye fine furniture and ye separate entrances for the Angels manie friends & manie relatiues and ye Special guest roomes with ye separate bathe for the Angels favourite friends and the Angels favourite relatiues & ye huge master bedroome (ye huge, huge master bedroome) with his-and-her bathroomes & in ye "her" bathroome ye sunken marble tubbe with ye golde fittings and ye adorable dolphin sculpture at ye one ende and ye bidet and ye water closet with ye frosted stained glasse windowe & ye separate heating system and ye cedar-lined sauna (which shall sleepe twelve) and ye indoore poole for ye swimming with his-and-her change roomes (ye "her" change roome in white marble) & ye extensive rear gardens with manie flowers and shadie trees & ye rough-hewn fitted stone walkwaies with ye adorable litle trolle statues & ye gazebo and ye gueste cottages like vnto the Angels house (howsobeit much, much smaller) where the Angels friends & relatiues (whome the Angel doest loue dearly, really she doest; but who causest the Angel's head to throbbe & her stomache to ache) can be sequestered at a great remoue from ye main house where they wilt (really) bee much happier anyway and bee free to come and goe as they doe please and where the Angel (though she louest them dearly, really she doest) might not see quite so much of them.

4: And Cerebvs said vnto the Cerebites, It shall come to pass that while thou art still in the processe of building ye first fewe of ye Greatest Houses for ye Greatest of the Angels that ye Spirite of God shal come upon thy women who art now women onely & lo, those who art women onely shal become Angels.

5: And the Cerebites didst inqvire of Cerebvs asking him, Speakest thou vnto us in uerities? Those of our women (who art now women onely) might yet become Angels ifsobe that wee buildest vnto the Greatest of our Angels houses such as thou hast described?

6: And Cerebvs spake vnto them saying, As surely as summer doeth followe springtime, it will bee so.





7: And it came to passe that when all the hoste of the Cerebites had voted for their Greatest Angel & they didst assemble all of the materials which they didst reqvire for the raising up of a Great House such as Cerebvs had described vnto them,

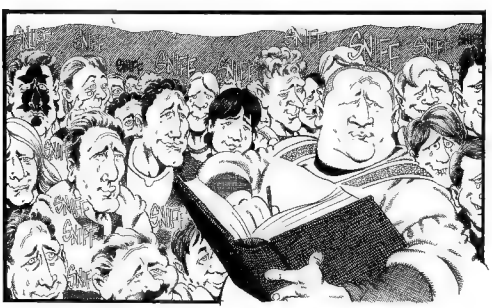
8: And when they had come foorth with all the women who didst desire to become Angels and with those Angels who wert not the Greatest,

9: Cerebvs spake vnto them saying, thy Greatest Angel standest here before thee and she desirest to speak vnto thee concerning the Great House which thou art about to build for her.

9: And then the one who had bene voted the Greatest Angel spake vnto the men of that place, saying vnto them:

10: It is uery nice of all of thee, but really I needeth a litle house onely for I

intend to marrie whensobe that the man I shal loue
doeth find me. And whensobe he hath found me & hath
married mee, I will liue in his house & wilt
haue no need of a house of mine owne.
11: Aswell I desire not a house which is larger than
I might clean & care for euery whit myself, for
I am not a seruant & I desire not that any
bee a seruant vnto me.
12: I desire to serue onely: my
husband and my selfe and my childrẽ.
13: And the saying of the Angel (which was called
Marcie) was well-pleasing to all the men.
14: And Cerebus spake vnto the men, saying, Hearken
vnto the Angel which is called Marcie, for an Angel
or a woman doeth desire a house which she can clean
and care for euery whit herself.
15: It is onely a deuill or a viper or a scorpion which desirest a
house greater than that, as it is onely a deuill or a viper or a
scorpion which doeth desire seruants.
16: And the men hearkened vnto the worde of Cerebus and the
worde of Marcie the Angel and began to build
manie, manie louelie small houses from the huge pile of stuffe
which hadst been intended for the building of Marcie the Angels
house onely. And, lo, the Spirit of God came upon
all the Angels (which were not the Greatest)
and upon all the women (who didst desire to become
Angels) and suddenly they (euery one of them!) didst (onely!) desire
louelie small houses for themselves.



essay

Islam, My Islam

I concluded the first instalment of "Islam, My Islam" with the assertion that the recent overwhelming victory by the United States in Afghanistan was evidence of God's preference for Freedom over Theocracy. I'll get back to that—I hope—next issue (or the issue after: I don't think I'm going to be able to finish this in three parts as I originally planned), in the meantime, I thought it worth doing a *Reader's Digest* version (assuming *Reader's Digest* would ever run anything this long) of the early history of Islam excerpted from Essad Bey's *Muhammad, A Biography,* a 1936 incarnation of Ibn Ishaq's original biography from the eighth century. Please note that this is not Scripture. Although all biographies of Muhammad have their origins in Ibn Ishaq's work and feature the same events, there is a *lot* of commentary and variations, conclusions drawn, different phrasing in direct quotes. As opposed to Scripture: where a Koran from the eighth century contains the same words as a Koran from the twentieth century. And with that *caveat emptor:*

Part III

The Prophet Muhammad was born in the year 570. While his mother, Amina, was pregnant with him, his father, Abdallah died. Then his mother died when he was six and the orphan was raised by his grandfather. His grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, was the acknowledged leader of the Koreish tribe, guardians of the Holy City of Mecca ("We are the sons of Abraham, men of honour, governors of the house of Allah, inhabitants of Mecca. No Arab has such virtue as we, nor such dignity as we. No man of the Koreish should honour territory which is secular in the way he honours that which is sacred—Mecca, the Sanctuary and the holy territory and the profane—that which is outside the sacred limits.") When Abdul Muttalib died none of his sons was influential enough to succeed him and leadership and influence began to pass to the descendants of his cousin, Omayya. After the death of his grandfather, Muhammad was entrusted to the custody of his uncle, Abu Talib.

Muhammad worked a variety of jobs as a young man—the best of which was as a superintendent in the house of a twice divorced (or widowed, accounts vary) woman named Khadija, reputedly the most honoured woman among the Koreish because of her lineage: not only the highest in nobility but also the richest in property. Muhammad became her "cameleer", a merchant travelling in caravans, conducting business and trade on her behalf, a trade at which he proved to be adept. Quite taken as she was with the young man, Khadija—some twenty years his senior—proposed to him and he accepted. She contrived to hold a dinner where she got her father Khowailid so drunk that he was unaware that he was giving her permission to marry one of her servants in exchange for a dowry of a few camels. She and Muhammad were faithfully married to one another for twenty-four years until her death. She was the only one of his wives to bear him children: three daughters who lived and three sons (Qasim, Abd Menaf and Atakhir) who died.

One of the greatest events in the history of the city of Mecca took place during Muhammad's lifetime: the reconstruction of the Kaaba, the sacred cube which Arab pilgrims circumambulated on the *hajj*, or pilgrimage. The original Kaaba had, reputedly, been built by Adam and had housed, since mankind's beginnings, the sacred white stone—the *ruku* as it is called, which Adam had brought to earth with him—white as the wings of an archangel—and which, it was said, absorbed men's sins when they kissed it so that, even by Muhammad's time, it had become black as night with the sins it will hold until Judgement Day. The Kaaba was later reconstructed, according to legend, by Abraham and Ishmael. Uncertain if Allah, or the three-hundred-and-sixty other gods of the Kaaba would permit it to be torn down and replaced, one Meccan was selected to begin the demolition. Everyone waited to see if he would be, you know, struck by lightning or something. When nothing happened to him, they all pitched in. And…

…when they reached the foundations "in the buttress they found an inscription in Syrian, and knew not what it meant until a Jew read it for them: 'I am Allah, the lord of Mecca! I created it

when I created the heavens and the earth, when I fashioned the sun and the moon, and I have appointed over it seven angels; Mecca will not perish until its two hills perish! It will be blessed to its inhabitants in water and milk!' *When they reached further into the foundations they found them to be green boulders adhering together like a single stone. When a man of the Koreish inserted a lever to separate the boulders, the whole of Mecca began to shake; so the people touched the foundation no more.'*

The groups of Koreish now collected stones for the rebuilding, each group gathering separately and they built until they reached the spot for the ruku*.....Then all the people quarrelled, because each group wished the honour of lifting the stone into place. So bitter were the quarrels that the groups made alliances and prepared to fight. One group produced a dish filled with blood and entered into a covenant unto death with another group by dipping their hands into the dish; they were therefore called blood-lickers...*

This "blood-thirstiness" is a recurring motif in the Arab world down to the present day and leads even a cursory scholar like myself to realize that "Bloodthirsty Arab" is not hyperbolic but is, in fact, the equivalent of the "Dirty Goyim". There are Muslims and there are Bloodthirsty Arabs just as there are Christians and there are Dirty Goyim. A recent instalment of Anne Kingston's "Modern Life" in the *National Post* recalled the murder of Jordan's prime minister Wasfi al-Tal in Cairo's Sheraton Hotel in 1971 by Black September, the first of many "elite" units of Yasser Arafat's Al-Fatah thugs and gangsters (a role played today by the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade): "As the politician lay dying, his blood flowing across the marble floor, one of the assassins knelt and lapped up the blood with his tongue." Whoever the assassin was, he might consider himself a Muslim. To me, he is just a bloodthirsty Arab.

The situation remained thus for four or five nights; then the Koreish assembled in the mosque to consult and reach a decision, and the oldest man among them said at last, "Why not let he who next enters through the door of this mosque be the arbiter in this quarrel, and let him decide it?" They agreed, and the first who entered was Muhammad. And they said, "This is el Amin [Muhammad's nickname among the Koreish, meaning the Reliable One] *! We agree that he shall judge." When he came near they told him of the problem and he said, "Bring me a cloak." When they had brought one, he placed the* ruku *in it with his own hands, saying, "Let every group take hold of a part of the cloak." Then all of them lifted it together, and when they reached the spot, the Apostle placed it in position with his own hands, and the building was continued over it.*

Sometime after this, the happily-married Muhammad—now related by marriage to the wealthiest and most influential family in Mecca, prosperous as a merchant and loved by all he came in contact with - underwent a dramatic change.

Inexplicably, in a very short span of time, Muhammad—who had always been careful of his appearance, even to the point of vanity—suddenly ceased to care about his attire and his hair. Even more worrisome, from a Meccan standpoint, he ceased to care about his business affairs. He began, instead, to wander the desert and became an infrequent visitor to his own palatial home. He became a *hanif,* one of the unhappy "seekers-after-God" who inhabited the mountains and the valleys around Mecca. One of the oldest and best-known of the *hanifs* was one of Khadija's cousins, Waraqa ben Nawfal, a blind man who had been a heathen, then a Jew and then a Christian and had been the first to translate parts of the Holy Scripture into Arabic.

For months Muhammad lived in and around Mount Hira, going days without food, progressively more fearful that he was possessed by a demon. "All my life I have abhorred the magicians and conjurers, and now I fear lest I become one myself," he said to Khadija. Days, weeks and months passed by in misery and anguish.

Then came the night of el Qadr.

In the night of el Qadr, in the month of Ramadan, the Word of God came to Muhammad who lay at the entrance to a cave on Mount Hira. Suddenly, he saw a vision—two eyes, the size of heaven, pierced through him and he heard a voice as distinct and clear as any he had ever heard, say,

"Iqra!"
"Recite!"

And as the voice was clear and easily understood, and had nothing terrifying about it, Muhammad answered, truthfully, "I cannot recite." Unseen hands grasped him, threw him to the ground and began to choke him so that Mohammad thought he would suffocate. And again the voice commanded, "Recite." In deathly fear, Muhammad answered, "What shall I recite?" Then the vision spread a great cloth before the eyes of the Prophet and, in fiery letters, Muhammad read the first revealed sura of the Koran [sura 96 if you're looking for it: the suras of the Koran are arranged in descending order of length. *"Clots of Blood"*—or *"Thick Blood"*, as it's also called—is one of the shortest of the 114 suras]

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!
Recite, thou, in the Name of thy Lord who created—
Created man from clots of blood!
Recite thou! For thy Lord is the most beneficent
Who hath taught the use of the pen:
Hath taught man that which he knoweth not.
Nay, verily, man is insolent,
Because he seeth himself possessed of riches.
Verily, to thy Lord is the return of all.
What thinkest thou? Hath he followed the guidance? or enjoined piety?
What thinkest thou? Hath he treated the truth as a lie and turned his back?
What? Doeth he not know how that God seeth?
Nay, verily, if he desisteth not, We shall seize him by the forelock,
The lying, sinful forelock!
Then, let him summon his associates;
We, too, will summon the guards of Hell.
Nay! Obey him not; but adore and draw nigh.

Suddenly, the vision disappeared and all was silent about Muhammad. Night lay over him and the desert slept, as the world itself slept in the night of el Qadr. Muhammad arose, stepped out of the cave and climbed to the top of the mountain. He saw the immense canopy of stars over Arabia, the fantastic pointed rocks and outcroppings, the city of Mecca and the Kaaba, the House of God at its center. And—again—a voice, like the stirring of the desert wind, came to his ear and spoke:

Thou art the Messenger of God, o Muhammad, and I am Gabriel, His archangel.

Then, the voice was silent, the two great eyes looking at him. Muhammad looked to the right and to the left, up and down. All around him was the piercing gaze of the archangel. Dizzily, Muhammad ran down the mountain. Like a madman, like one pursued, he ran through the rocky ravines. Until noon of the next day, he roamed through the valley and—everywhere!—the eyes of Gabriel followed him.

Muhammad ultimately fled to his home and to his wife's side:

"When I came to Khadija I narrated to her what I had seen and she said, 'Be of good cheer and comfort thyself! I swear by Him in whose hand the life of Khadija is, that I hope thou wilt be the prophet of this nation!' Then she arose, collected her garments around her and departed to Waraqa." She described to him what Muhammad had seen and heard, and Waraqa exclaimed, "Holy! Holy! I swear to Him in whose hands the life of Waraqa is, that the Law of Moses has been bestowed upon him and he is the prophet of this nation! Tell him to stand firm." Khadija then returned to the apostle of God and informed him of what Waraqa had said.

On the following day, Muhammad—still doubting and disbelieving—went to the Kaaba. According to custom, he circumambulated the holy edifice seven times, and at the seventh time he

came upon the blind Waraqa. "Tell me what you have seen and heard," Waraqa bade him, and when Muhammad repeated what Khadija had already told him, he said with a trembling voice, "Verily, you are the Prophet of this people, for the greatest of all archangels has appeared to you. Men will not believe you. They will call you a liar, will mistreat you, damn you and oppose you. Remain steadfast, however, for you have been called to be the Prophet of the people." And the old man bowed down before Muhammad and kissed him and blessed him.

"I am the Messenger of God," said Muhammad, in the courtyard of the Kaaba surrounded by three-hundred-and-sixty idols of stone and wood.

The revelations didn't resume for some time and Muhammad began to despair. Finally

In order to put an end to the tortures, the despair and the torments which racked his soul, the Prophet decided to climb upon a high peak and cast his body—which he had become convinced was possessed by demons—into the yawning void below. He bent down and saw little stones, which his foot dislodged, vanish into the deep. Only one step separated him from everlasting peace. Suddenly, he heard a voice, low but audible, in his ear. Muhammad stood rooted to the spot. His eyes swept the horizon, then he looked up and—high above his head—was the Indescribable One, the archangel who revealed to him the second sura [sura 93, "The Brightness"]:

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!
By the noon-day brightness and by the night when it darkeneth!
Thy Lord hath not forsaken thee, neither hath he been displeased.
And surely shall the future be better for thee than the past:
And in the end shall thy Lord be bounteous to thee and thou be satisfied.
Did he not find thee an orphan and give thee a home?
And found thee erring and guided thee?
And found thee needy and enriched thee?
As to the orphan, therefore, wrong him not;
And as to him that asketh of thee, chide him not away.
And as for the favours of thy Lord: tell them abroad.

Accordingly, God's Last Apostle began—at first in secret—to promulgate the gospel bestowed by God upon him to those of his family whom he trusted:

When prayer was made obligatory to God's Last Apostle, Gabriel came to him when he was in the highest part of Mecca and spurred his heel into the ground towards the valley; a spring gushed forth and Gabriel performed religious ablutions. Muhammad observed how purification for prayers was to be made, and washed himself likewise. Then Gabriel rose and prayed, and God's Last Apostle did so after him, and then Gabriel departed. When God's Last Apostle came to Khadija he performed the religious ablutions in her presence to show her how purity was attained, just as Gabriel had done. And she, too, washed as she had been shown. Then the Apostle prayed as Gabriel had prayed, and Khadija prayed after him.

Then Gabriel came to him and held noon prayers when the sun passed its zenith; and prayed the afternoon prayers with him when his shadow was the same length as his own body. Then he prayed the sunset prayers when the sun disappeared, and the last evening prayer when the twilight disappeared. Next day, he held morning prayers with the Apostle at dawn; then the midday prayers when the shadow was one with him; and afternoon prayers when it was twice as long as he; then the sunset orisons when the sun disappeared as on the preceding day. Then he prayed with him the last evening prayers when the first third of the night had elapsed, and lastly the morning prayers, when the morning dawned but the sun had not yet risen. Then he said, "O Muhammad! The time of prayer is between thy prayers of yesterday and today."

The first male to believe in God's Last Messenger was Ali, Muhammad's cousin, whom Muhammad had adopted when a severe famine had made the strain of caring for his large family a burden to

Muhammad's uncle and Ali's father, Abu Talib.

One day, Abu Talib happened to discover them at prayer and asked the Apostle, "What religion is this that I see you practicing?" He replied, "This is the religion of God, and of His angels, of His apostles and of our father Abraham. God has sent me with this religion, as an apostle to His servants; and you, my uncle are the most worthy on whom I could bestow advice and invitation to guidance; you are the most worthy to comply in it and to aid me therein." But Abu Talib said, "I cannot abandon the religion of my forefathers and what they believed in; but no harm shall be done to you as long as I live." Abu Talib asked Ali, "What religion is this thou believest in?" and Ali replied, "I believe in the Apostle of God and that his revelation is true. I pray with him and I follow him." His father said, "He has called thee only to what is good; therefore obey him."

Ali was ten years old at the time and—after a dinner which the Prophet had hosted for the men of his family in his first attempt to convert them—was the only one to step forward and profess Islam. "You see?" the Apostle of God said to his relatives, "This is my vizier, my satrap." After the death of the Prophet, this would bring about a fundamental schism within Islam which makes the fracture between Catholicism and Protestantism look like a minor tiff by comparison. We'll get to that in due course.

The next to believe was Zayd, who had arrived from Syria as a slave. A nephew of Khadija had given him to her as a present. When Muhammad saw him he asked Khadija for him and she agreed. Muhammad then freed him and adopted him as his son. Zayd's father came looking for him and found him. Muhammad gave him the choice of staying with Muhammad or returning to his father and Zayd chose to remain with Muhammad. When God bestowed Muhammad's mission on him, Zayd professed Islam.

Next to profess Islam was Abu Bakr, *Assidiq* ("The True"). Muhammad later said, "I have preached Islam to no one who did not hesitate, consider, and contradict, save Abu Bakr, who neither hesitated nor was perplexed." Abu Bakr's popularity among the Koreish led to Uthman, al-Zubayr, Abdul-Rahman, Sad bin Abu Waqqas and Talha professing Islam at his invitation. In the entire Arabian peninsula there were now eight Arab men—actually seven Arab men and one Arab boy—who believed in One God.

Soon several men and women had made their profession of Islam and it was much discussed in Mecca. Then God commanded his Apostle to make public the revelation and to invite the people to accept it; hitherto—for three years since the first revelation—it had been kept secret. God said to him, "Publish that which thou hast been commanded, and turn away from the idolaters."

When the Apostle began to spread Islam among his people as God had commanded him, they did not gainsay him until he began to abuse their idols.

At the time, Mecca, the Sanctuary and the Kaaba had degenerated almost entirely into paganism. The Sanctuary itself was encircled by the aforementioned hundreds of pagan idols—including statues of Abraham and Ishmael and a painting of the Virgin Mary—and virtually every religion and pseudo-religion was welcomed to make the Sanctuary a pilgrimage destination. The Koreish had even instituted a rule that no food could be brought into the sacred precincts from outside (which might be where the Disney Corporation got the idea for Disneyland) and that clothing that was brought from outside and worn while performing the circuits of the Kaaba needed to be thrown away immediately afterwards for the sake of purity. Needless to say—given that the sale of food and clothing in Mecca was a lucrative source of Koreish wealth—disapproving of the scam didn't endear Muhammad to them:

Several nobles of the Koreish, including Utba and Abu Sofyan, went to Abu Talib and said, "Your nephew has insulted our gods and condemned our religion. He considers our young men to be fools and our fathers to have erred. You must either restrain him or allow us free action against him, since your religion is the same as ours; opposed to his." But the Apostle continued to preach the religion of God and to seek conversions, and the people hated him. Again they went to Abu Talib and said, "You are aged, noble and highly respected among us and we have already asked you to prohibit your nephew from offending us. But you have not prohibited him and, by

Allah, we shall not overlook his insults unless you guarantee his future good behaviour. Otherwise, we shall fight both him and you." After this they departed and Abu Talib was much grieved by the enmity of his tribe; but he could not surrender or desert the Apostle of God.

After this visit, Abu Talib sent for the Apostle and said, "Consider my life and yours, and do not burden me with what I cannot bear." God's Last Messenger feared from these words that his uncle had determined to desert him and he said, "If they were to place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, I would not abandon my mission." Then tears started in his eyes and he wept. But when he turned to depart, Abu Talib said, "Nephew! Go, and speak what you wish. By Allah! I shall never fail you."

And the nobles went once more to Abu Talib and offered him the brilliant youth Umara in exchange for Muhammad, but Abu Talib replied, "It is a wicked thing you propose, that you give me your son to feed, and I give you mine to kill! This shall never be!"

This sort of tribal loyalty runs deep within the Arab heart—both pagan and Muslim—due, in no small part (I suspect) to the fact that every Arab and every Muslim recognizes that at any given point Abu Talib might have weakened and surrendered Muhammad to the not-so-tender mercies of the Koreish and Islam would have died in the cradle. It's really the reverse of the Jesus circumstance: had the Jews *not* surrendered Jesus to the Romans and had Caesar's representative in Palestine *not* ordered his execution—thus welcoming Jesus' martyrdom into the heart of the Roman Empire and sowing the seeds of that Empire's destruction/conversion—Christianity might have died in the cradle. On a less exalted level of contemplation, I think this explains why the offer of $25 million U.S. for Osama bin Laden and demands that the Taliban surrender bin Laden into American custody fell on entirely and scrupulously deaf Muslim ears. Faced with the offer, every Afghan, al-Qaeda and Taliban Muslim became Abu Talib and Abu Talib can make only one right choice under the circumstances: you just don't surrender a Muslim to the infidels.

Faced with the season of pilgrimage in Mecca and an unrepentant Muhammad who continued to preach the Suras given to him by the One God, the Koreish needed some sort of explanation for the pilgrims as to *what* this fellow Muhammad *was* exactly. So the Koreish assembled to discuss the matter. It was suggested to al-Walid, their chief, that they call the Apostle of God a soothsayer. "He is not a soothsayer. We have seen soothsayers; he does not murmur and rhyme as they do." Then it was suggested that he was possessed by djinns (wicked spirits—not as bad as a Satan but wicked: as God says in the Koran, "I will surely fill hell with Djinn and men together." Sura 32:13). "He is not possessed. We have seen lunatics and know them. He does not gasp, nor roll his eyes, nor mutter." A poet? "He is not a poet. We know all the poets and their styles. He is not a poet." What then?

The best will be to say that he is a sorcerer, because he has come with words which are sorcery and which separate a man from his father or from his brother or from his wife or from his family.

The Koreish sat by the roadside during the season of pilgrimage, warning everyone about Muhammad. Which, of course, only made everyone more interested and the fame of the Apostle of God began to spread outward from Mecca. The Koreish imprisoned many of the believers, heaped insults on them and tried to turn them away from Islam. That didn't work either. So they sent for Muhammad.

The Apostle of God hastened to them in the hope that they had conceived a favourable opinion of what he had told them. But they only accused him once more of seeking riches and power. This he denied and reaffirmed his mission from God. [They said to him:]

"Ask, then, your Lord to send an angel to bear witness to your veracity. Ask Him to give you gardens, palaces and treasures of gold and silver to enrich you; we know you go, now, to the markets to procure food as we procure it. Then, we shall know your rank and station with Allah." The Apostle of God said, "I shall not do this, nor ask for this. I was not sent to you for this; but God has sent me as a bearer of glad tidings and a preacher."

They went on, "Then cause the heavens to fall upon us, for we shall not believe you unless you do something miraculous." God's Last Messenger replied, "This is the choice of God! If He wishes, He will do it." Then they said, "We shall not cease to persecute you until we destroy you or

you destroy us. We shall not believe you until you come with Allah and all the angels."

Many persecutions and imprisonments and tortures of converts to Islam ensued, again, with no appreciable effect apart from bringing more converts.

The Koreish decided to counteract Muhammad's influence by forming a league against him and his followers. They applied economic and social sanctions, forbade trade with him and banned the Believers from marrying Koreish women. This boycott had some success and the Apostle lived in a virtual stage of siege for close on three years, except during the period of pilgrimage. All he could do was consolidate the faith of those who were with him. At last, however, the ban was lifted through the influence of several Koreish who—though not Believers sympathized with their plight. The Apostle was now fifty years of age.

Khadija, the wife of the Apostle, and Abu Talib, his uncle and protector died the same year, reportedly within three days of each other. After the death of Abu Talib, the Koreish heaped greater insults upon the Prophet which they would not have attempted while Abu Talib was alive. One strew dust on Muhammad's head. The Apostle went with the dust on his head to his house and one of his daughters washed it off and wept. The Apostle said, "Do not weep, my daughter. God will protect thy father."

Shortly thereafter, a turning point in the history of Islam took place. During the next season of pilgrimage, Muhammad went among the Arab tribes, introducing himself, and met a small company of the Khazraj—a most fateful meeting, indeed.

When the Apostle of God met them at al-Aqaba, he asked, "Are you allies of the Jews?" And they said, "Yes." They sat down with him and he invited them to believe in God, expounded Islam to them and recited the Koran. Now, God had ensured that the Jews who lived in the country of the Khazraj, and who were Children of the Book (whereas the Khazraj themselves were polytheists and idolaters) should always say—whenever a quarrel broke out between themselves and the Khazraj—"A prophet will soon be sent and we shall become his followers and kill you with his aid." So, when the Apostle of God spoke to these men of Khazraj and invited them to believe in God, they said to one another, "This is the prophet with whom the Jews have threatened us. We must forestall them and join him before they do" Accordingly, they accepted Islam, saying, "We have left our people, for there is no tribe so divided by enmity and wickedness as they. Perhaps God will unite them through you. We shall go to them and urge them to accept your views and this religion so that, if God unites them around you, none will be more exalted than yourself." Then they returned to their country as believers.

When they reached Medina, they spoke of the Apostle of God and invited their people to accept Islam, so that acquaintance with it spread until there was not one among the dwellings of all their families in which the name of the Apostle of God had not been spoken. The converts in Medina became known as the ansar, *the Helpers.*

The next year (621 C.E.), *when the season of pilgrimage came again, twelve men of the Helpers met God's Last Messenger at the hill of al-Aqaba; this is called the meeting of "the first hill":*

"We paid homage to the Apostle of God after the unmilitant manner of women—this happened before war was made incumbent upon us. We pledged that we would not associate other gods with God, nor steal, nor commit fornication, nor kill our female children..."

Prior to the advent of Islam, it had been a commonplace practice among the tribal Arabs to bury female babies alive in the sand. Not all of them, of course, but enough that female infanticide was, as I say, a commonplace practice in Arabia in the seventh century.

"...nor tell lies, nor disobey what is right. If we fulfill these conditions, paradise is to be ours; if we transgress and suffer punishment in this world, it will be an expiation. But if our sin remains concealed until the Day of Resurrection, the affair rests with God to punish or forgive."

Skipping ahead to the *second* "meeting of the hill":

"The Apostle of God came with his uncle al-Abbas, an unbeliever who, nevertheless, wished to see his nephew conclude a firm alliance. Al-Abbas spoke first, saying, 'You know that Muhammad is our kinsman! We have protected him against those of our own people who oppose him. He enjoys great dignity among his people and protection in his country; nevertheless, he shuns them and wishes to ally himself with you...'"

I suspect that this "white lie" was why an unbeliever like al-Abbas was deputized to speak on behalf of the Prophet. At the very least it was an exaggeration to say that Muhammad "enjoys great dignity among his people and protection in his country". But saying it circumvented the obvious Arab tribal question of, "If you're the Prophet of God, why are the people of your own tribe so opposed to you? And why should we protect someone that another tribe has so thoroughly rejected?" I doubt the tribal Arabs would have been familiar with—or much impressed by—Jesus' observation that "a prophet is not without honour except in his own country." Keep Uncle al-Abbas in mind, he becomes quite significant much, much later on.

"'If, therefore, you think you can keep your promise and protect him against his enemies, you may assume the burden you have undertaken; but if there is any likelihood of your surrendering and abandoning him after he has gone over to you, then leave him be, for he is safer among his own people.' Then we asked the Apostle for his opinion and he said, 'I call on you to protect me as you would protect your own women and children.' A man called al-Bara then took hold of his hand and swore, 'We shall protect you against everything from which we protect our own selves. Accept therefore our allegiance. We are warriors who have inherited the right to arms.'

"This speech was interrupted by Abul-Haytham, who said, 'We have ties with other men (he meant the Jews of Medina) which we would have to sever. If we do this, and God aids you to victory, will you not return to your own people and abandon us?' The Apostle of God smiled and replied, 'By no means. Blood is blood, and shedding is shedding; you belong to me and I to you. I shall fight those whom you fight and I shall be at peace with him who is at peace with you. Bring me twelve leaders who may be charged with their people's affairs.' And they brought nine men from the Khazraj tribe and three from the Aws tribe.

"The Apostle of God said to the twelve leaders, 'You are the sureties for your people just as Jesus' disciples were and I stand surety for my people.' And they agreed.

"Al-Abbas asked the people, 'Are you aware of the conditions on which you pledge allegiance to this man? You pledge yourselves to him, to wage war against all and sundry. If your possessions should be ruined by misfortune and your nobles slain, and you should give him up, then you will reap shame in this world and the next. If, however, you think you can keep your promises in the face of all misfortune, then it will profit you in this world and the next.' They replied, 'We shall take him even at the risk of losing all else,' and turning to the Apostle, they asked, 'But what will be our reward if we keep our promise?' He replied, 'Paradise!' and they said, 'Stretch forth thy hand,' and paid him homage."

It seems to me that this is one of the linchpin moments in the history of Islam which—viewed in what I, and I think most reasonable people would assess as a "skewed" fashion—underpins the notion of martyrdom as a centrepiece of Islam. Muhammad was seeking *protection* from the Koreish and promising the reward of Paradise for that *protection.* He doesn't attempt to whip the Khazraj into a killing frenzy. Even al-Abbas' assertion of what was at stake: "your possessions should be ruined, and your nobles slain," doesn't suggest personal martyrdom even as a subtext. Any and all men of the Khazraj tribe, under tribal law, would do exactly what the nobles of that tribe told them to do. If that entailed dying in a conflict ordered by the nobles, well, that was just part and parcel of being a tribal member in good standing. That treaty just meant that protecting Muhammad was one of the things that all members of the tribe were now responsible for—it was not intended that they would provoke a suicidal conflict in order to enter Paradise. To make a mental leap from that *Arab* tribal reality to the *Militant Islamic* misconstruction of *jihad,* "striving" –the full expression, used frequently in the Koran, is *jihad fi sabeel allah:* "striving in the path/the way/the cause of God"—is, to me (and again, I think to most reasonable people and to most Muslims) a lunatic extrapolation. One which worsens—*anecdotally*—even as the

vast majority of Arabs have been liberating themselves from their tribal loyalties and tribal constraints and implicit tribal bloodthirstiness and have come into a fuller possession of their God-given exercise of autonomous free will: even as the monotheistic—Muslim nature largely supplants the tribal—bloodthirsty Arab—nature, it is, unfortunately, still the vanishing population which dominates Islam and the perception of Islam both from within and without: in that it is hard to *ignore* an insignificant minority or even to accurately perceive it *as* a minority when its members are blowing themselves up in discos, in pizza parlours and on buses and, in the process, killing dozens of civilians, calling it "striving in the path of God" and viewing themselves as martyrs.

When God gave His Apostle permission to wage war, the promise to fight immediately became a condition of allegiance to Islam. This had not been so at the first meeting on the hillside, when homage was paid "in the manner of women"; God had not then given His Apostle permission to fight. He had given permission neither to wage war nor to shed blood, but only to call men to God, to endure insults patiently and to pardon the ignorant. Some of the followers of the Apostle had therefore been forced to flee from persecution into the countryside, some to Abyssinia [sorry, owing to space constraints I skipped that part], *others to Medina and elsewhere. When the Koreish rejected the mercy of God and spurned His prophet, they tormented or drove away men who proclaimed the One-ness of God, believed in His prophet and adhered to His religion.*

God therefore permitted Muhammad to fight and to aid his followers against those who tyrannized them. The first verse which came down permitting him to wage war and to shed blood began "Permission is granted unto those who fight <u>because they have been oppressed</u>, *and God* <u>may</u> *aid those who have been driven from their homes merely for saying "Our lord is God"...*[<u>decided emphasis</u> mine]

Again, using this as a foundation for, as an example, the *intifada* which the Arabs have been waging in and around Jerusalem for the last year and half is a lunatic extrapolation of a Koranic verse and the circumstances under which it was sent down to Muhammad. If there is any Jew who has ever driven anyone from his or her home for saying "Our lord is God," I would sure like to meet him.

The larger point that I'm trying to make here is that it has to be born in mind when reading those Suras and verses which are concerned with waging war on the infidel ("Fight against them until there be no more temptation and until the religion be God's") that they were sent down to Muhammad *after* his alliance with the Khazraj when God had already given the pagan Arabs of Mecca, the Koreish, *more* than sufficient time to repent of their polytheism and their idolatry. Many, many of the suras of the Koran make mention of the fact that no civilization or people was ever destroyed except that God first sent "a plain warner," a messenger or a prophet to warn that civilization or that people that they were skating on very thin ice, the clock was ticking down, times a-wasting, etc. etc. (See Jonah's warning to the people of Nineveh in the Books of the Prophets). Muhammad preached daily in the sacred precincts of Mecca for year upon year upon year the Word that God sent down to him through Gabriel. Finally, in God's View (and who else's View has any relevance in these situations?) enough was enough and harsher measures were required. For the Koreish, the alliance forged by Muhammad with the Khazraj meant that the last few seconds on the clock had ticked down, time was up and there was going to be a very short sudden-death overtime period. To view those suras and those verses which document God's *seventh*-century judgement upon heathen, pagan idolators as having even the vaguest relevance to the U.S. housing a military contingent in Saudi Arabia or Muslim boys getting their hair cut like Leonardo diCaprio in the *twentieth* century is, to me, and (I have to believe) to any reasonable thinking Muslim, not only a lunatic extrapolation of those suras and those verses but betrays inescapable evidence of a shameful inclination to perceive inaccurately: to perceive the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia, or Muslim boys wearing their hair like Leonardo diCaprio—or even the existence the State of Israel—as representing *oppression* of Islam, thus warranting God's permission to wage war. Muhammad *was* oppressed by the *Koreish*, Islam *was* oppressed by the *Koreish*. Because of that *genuine* oppression, God gave Muhammad and his Muslim followers permission to fight against the *Koreish*.

The verse continued by explaining that they (the Muslims) *had committed no crime against the people* (the Koreish) *except that they worshipped God, and when they made Islam universal* <u>they</u>

would observe the appointed times for prayer, give alms and enjoin all men to do good and to abstain from evil.

Again, I think it a lunatic extrapolation to see this instruction as meaning "observe the appointed times for prayer, give alms, enjoin all men to do good and to abstain from evil and if they—in your view—don't cooperate fully, then, by all means, blow yourself up while standing next to them in a pizza parlour."

The anonymous narrator of the events of this second meeting concludes with:

"After the act of allegiance was over, Satan roared from the top of the hill in such a loud voice as I had never heard. He cried to the people of Mina (the surrounding countryside): 'Beware of this despicable apostate and his followers! Verily they are assembled to attack you!' And the Apostle of God replied, 'This is the Contemptible One of the hill. Hearken to me, O enemy of God! I shall make an end of thee yet!' Then the Apostle told the people to depart to their caravans again, but one of them said, 'If thou wish it, tomorrow we shall attack these people of Mina with our swords.' The Apostle of God replied, 'We have not been commanded to do that.' Accordingly we returned to our caravans and slept there till the morning."

There's a good example of "Djinn possession" or the inability of pagan tribal Arabs to distinguish their right hand from their left, whatever you want to call it: "Hey, you *want* us to slaughter the people of Mina?" Nonono. *I'm* the Apostle of God. Slaughtering the people of Mina was *Satan's* idea. Fourteen hundred years later, that guy would probably fit the profile of a suicide bomber.

When, on the hill, the Helpers swore allegiance to the Apostle, to adopt Islam, to aid him and those who followed him as well as any other Muslims who might seek shelter with them, he ordered his companions and others who were with him in Mecca to emigrate to Medina, that they might meet their Helper brothers. He said, "God has marked out for you kinsmen and homes where you may find refuge." Accordingly, the Meccan followers left the city in groups. These were afterwards known as the mohajirun, *the Emigrants, and were then around a hundred in number.*

But the Apostle of God remained in Mecca, waiting for God's command to leave Mecca and to migrate to Medina.

The command came and soon Muhammad was living in Medina, where it became apparent that many of the Helpers were not exactly, well, *helpful*—paying lip-service to Islam but openly doubting the political wisdom of supporting the Apostle against the Koreish. These unhelpful Helpers came to be known—and reviled—as the *munafiqun,* the Hypocrites. Strategically, Muhammad attempted to win over the three Jewish tribes in Medina, the Banu Qainoqa, Banu Nadhir and the Banu Qorhaida (at this point he saw himself and his followers as indistinguishable from Jews and Christians so "one big happy family" was usually the first option he would pursue) to shore up his forces, drawing up a treaty specifying mutual support, and the paying of ransom and blood-ransom. Ransom was a negotiated amount for the return of a prisoner. Blood ransom was the amount paid to the family of someone that you had killed to keep them from sending someone to kill you. Even if the text has been corrupted over the centuries, it's an interesting document, jumping back and forth between "tribal Arabic" and "Islamic":

In the Name of God, the merciful, the compassionate! This concerns the Believers fled from Mecca and those of Medina, as well as those who follow them; join with them, and fight with them, for they are a community excluding all other men!

This would, to me—apart from the salutation—be a good example of the "tribal Arabic" part of the treaty and was probably not anything to get the Jews—who had been on the *losing* end of "excluding all other men" more often than the *winning* end for about five millennia by this point—terrifically enthused. Even when the document becomes more "Islamic":

Verily, the protection of God is indivisible and extends to the meanest Believer of all; and each

must befriend other Believers above all men. Jews who follow us shall be given aid and equality; they shall not be oppressed, nor shall aid be given to others against them. The safety of Believers is indivisible, no one shall be saved at the expense of another, when battles are being fought in the name of God, save with equity and justice.

...it would not have taken a Talmudic scholar (of which there was, reportedly, no shortage in the three Jewish tribes living in Medina) to recognize an "Oy vey" clause when he saw it. "Save with equity and justice". "So, uh, *who—exactly*—gets to decide what *constitutes* 'equity and justice', in the event that—heaven forfend—we should not see eye-to-eye on something?" That, as it turns out, was covered in the last sentence of the *subsequent* clause, which (I would guess) skyrocketed off the "Oy vey" scale and then charted somewhere around 7.5 on the "Oy *gevalt*" scale: "If you are at variance on any matter, refer it to God or to Muhammad." Considering that God was possibly even called Allah in the document (as it was translated) this would represent something of a (permit me to indulge in a little understatement here) *problem* for the Jews and they probably signed the treaty with the same philosophical resignation that Israel's representatives brought to the signing of the Oslo Peace Accord at the White House in 1993—while listening, on that occasion, to translations of Yasser Arafat's speech celebrating the document as a "final solution". You know. Smiling on the outside (never let the goyim see you sweat) but with that "Oy *gevalt*" look in their eyes.

There follows in Ibn Ishaq's biography of the Apostle a number of anecdotes concerning Muhammad's relationship with the Jews of Medina, sometimes with the Christians taking a hand, sometimes not: the Jews testing Muhammad with really obscure questions of theology (many of which have, to me, the taint of Babylon or, at least, King Solomon about them, as well as Alan Moore's beloved—you should again pardon the expression, *feh*—Kabalah and what-not) which, with God's assistance, Muhammad always gets right. There is even sura 18 (The Cave) which predates Medina (again, according to Ibn Ishaq's biography) where the Jews told the Koreish how to test whether Muhammad was a prophet or a fake by asking him about this group of believers who had fled the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and who had gone into a cave. Muhammad said, "I'll tell you tomorrow." And then didn't hear anything from Gabriel for about a month until he was really taking a beating from the Meccans and the Jews, credibility-wise. According to prophetic tradition, this is where the term *inshallah*—God willing—came from. Gabriel berated the prophet for saying "I'll tell you tomorrow," instead of "if God wills, I will give you an answer tomorrow" or "perhaps my Lord will give you an answer tomorrow." You know; you want to play "footsie" with the Jews of Mecca, that's one thing—God will take it under consideration—but God is *not* your on-call research assistant. One noteworthy confrontation with a Christian sticks out, to me:

A Christian asked Muhammad, "Do you want us to worship you as we worship Jesus, son of Mary?" The apostle replied, "God forbid that I should worship anyone besides Him, or command any other besides Him to be worshipped. God has not sent me to do that."

This is the fundamental Christian-Muslim schism: what is called in the Koran "joining gods with God." I think Jesus (*and* Mary, for that matter) would be appalled that they were—and are— worshipped as deities. "Jesus is the son of God *and* Jesus *is* God". You know, I just can't follow that. Dave Sim is the son of Ken Sim. Dave Sim is not Ken Sim. "Like father, like son" is just an expression of approximations. "The apple never falls far from the tree" is not synonymous with "an apple is a tree." Nu?

The Koranic verse which best approximates my own thinking on the subject is contained in the sura The Table, 5:19:

> Infidels, now, are they who say, "Verily, God is the Messiah bin Mariam *[son of Mary]*!
> Say: "And who could aught obtain from God, if He chose to destroy the Messiah bin Mariam
> And his mother and all who are on the earth together?"

Exactly. Do you really think that Jesus and Mary were as powerful as God? That they weren't—as the Muslims claim—*both* Muslims, in the sense of being completely *submissive* to God's Will? That whatever ability they had—and have—to intercede with God (something else which I, for one, sincere-

ly doubt) on behalf of Christians *supersedes* God's Sovereignty? That is, if the Virgin Mary wants you to be blessed and God *doesn't* want you to be blessed that it's, hey, just too bad for God? It seems to me that only women and mothers can be stupid enough to believe that and that—whatever stupid women and mothers *want* to call it—it is Goddess worship, plain and simple. Blasphemy.

Anyway, Muhammad, having been granted permission to wage war against the Koreish launched his first attack in 623 when he was fifty-three years old. He equipped an expedition of twelve men and placed at its head Abdallah bin Jahsh, presenting him with sealed instructions he was not to open until he had reached the desert: "Go in the Name of God and with the blessings of God to Nakhla and there await the Koreish caravans. Force none of your men to accompany you. Fulfill my commands with those who follow you of their own free will." Jahsh spied a small Koreish caravan accompanied by four merchants. In the middle of the night, as the full moon ushered in the sacred month (Rajab, in this case), the warriors attacked and bound the merchants. The caravan, laden with leather, raisins and wine fell into the hands of the robbers whose arrival back in Medina was met with consternation. It was an unforgiveable transgression of Arab tribal law to wage war in one of the sacred months. This led to the sura verse:

> They ask you about the Sacred Month and if it is permitted to wage war in it. It is a great sin to fight in the Sacred Month, but in the eyes of God, it is a much greater sin to shut men out from the path of God and from God's House, the Kaaba.

(I can't vouch for the accuracy of the transcription: those suras contained in the *biographies* of Muhammad get pretty mangled over the centuries. I repeat, these are *not* Scripture.) From this point on, Islam becomes a strange mixture of piety and banditry—which looks very strange from a Judeo-Christian "Thou shalt not steal" perspective, but which was pretty much the status quo for tribal Arabs. Arab warfare was as concerned with looting an enemy's caravans as it was with meeting him on the battlefield…if not *more* concerned.

Next came the battle of Badr, where the Prophet—having bribed the Mecca-friendly tribes in the area to turn a blind eye—led three hundred men to Badr to intercept a large Koreish caravan returning from Syria. Abu Sofyan, who was leading the caravan, was no stranger to desert intrigue and noticed date stones in the camel dung along his route as he approached Badr (only in Medina were dates plentiful enough to feed to camels). He changed his route and sent messengers ahead to Mecca where the Koreish raised an army of a thousand in pretty short order—which was really at the upper range of what Arabs could even *conceive of* in an armed force (just so ardent were they to rid themselves of the Muslims). So, instead of a caravan, Muhammad and his Muslims were met by an armed force three times their size. The strange ballet of Arab battle was enacted. First poets rode in front of each army, reciting their poems of warfare, ridiculing their enemies.

[Sorry. That requires a short digression. Poetry was the life's blood of the Arab, on the order of the Celtic Bards. Powerfully magical. A particularly scathing and satirical poem could undermine a man's honour in a way that no sword could. At the same time, a poet was viewed as a thoroughly disreputable and low form of life: a profession for human weasels. It was Muhammad's greatest fear, as the suras were revealed to him, that he was becoming a poet and the perception that he was a poet persisted for many years: "Your verses are very beautiful", "Your rhythm technique has created a new epoch in our literature." To which Muhammad could only, wearily, reply, "I am not a poet and these are not my poems. They are the words of God which come from my mouth." In answer to the accusation that Muhammad wrote the suras himself, God repeatedly invites the accusers to "bring forth a sura like it, if ye be men of truth." The language of the Koran is still regarded as the most perfect incarnation of the Arabic tongue and its poetry—er "poetry"—is so integral to it that the *printed* Koran is regarded as a commentary and only the *recited* version—in Arabic—is considered scriptural. "*Iqra!*" "Recite!"]

Then individual nobles rode out to challenge their opposite numbers—in the case of the Muslims, Ali, Hamza and Obaida. Who won 3-1: three Koreish dead, one Muslim dead. Seriously. This was how an Arab battle of the seventh century was conducted. A decisive win by the hand-picked nobles over the hand-picked nobles was *usually* as far as it got. However, in this case, the Koreish—being infinitely

greater nobles than the rag-tag Muslims and with, consequently, a greater loss of face at stake—took the loss really badly and, against Arab tradition, launched small band after small band against the three hundred Muslims. One-by-one, the best soldiers of Mecca met their deaths at the hands of Muhammad's thoroughly disciplined followers who just stayed in one body and met each attack as it came. Final score: Muslims 70 Koreish 14 .

Chasing the disgraced Koreish from the field, the Muslims acquired 150 camels, 10 horses, 70 prisoners (to be ransomed for a tidy sum), as well as weapons and clothing.

As a reward Ali was given Muhammad's daughter, Fatima, for his wife.

One result of the battle of Badr was that Muhammad became less convinced of the wisdom of the treaty he had signed with the Jews of Medina—now that he had seen that God's favour tended to more-than-balance-out the odds against the Muslims. As he told his followers, "Not you, but the angels of God fought our victory today." Poetry figured here, as well—as many of the Jewish youths of Medina delighted in taunting the Prophet with their satirical verses.

The Prophet was more sensitive to verses of ridicule, to loose humour and to disrespect than he was to open revolt and resistance...the Prophet did not persecute or execute many people and those who were so punished were, more often than not, poets and jokers. "The satire of the poet is more painful than the lance of the enemy," Muhammad once said, for he was without a sense of humour.

Medina became an arena of terror. All blood-ties, all bonds of friendship were broken. Men were murdered without anyone daring to avenge them. No one thought of opposing the terror for now the Prophet was building the Nation of God. The Prophet was never unjust in his judgements. His blows were brutal, but they only hit the guilty.

It was not accidental that the majority of the punishment, murders and acts of terror were directed against the Jews. Slowly but steadily, the relationship between Muhammad and the three Jewish tribes of Medina grew worse. It became more and more apparent that there was no place in the Nation of God for the Jews (permit me a small interpolation: HAH!]. *For their part, the Jews were prepared to submit to the new state of affairs, but their adherence to their own faith was steadfast. Haughtily, they looked down upon the wild prophet of the heathen. Versed in Talmudic dialectics, they refuted Muhammad's arguments with ease.*

Let me interrupt to say that the Jews wouldn't have had to retreat to the exotic confines of the *Talmud* to refute Muhammad. His knowledge of the Torah and the Gospels themselves was abysmal. Reportedly, he believed that the Torah's Joseph—the second youngest son of Jacob and father to Manasseh and Ephraim—and the Synoptic Gospels' Joseph—the father of Jesus—were the same Joseph. In defence of Muhammad he never claimed that the ideas and conclusions he had, personally, drawn from his own cursory knowledge of the Torah and the Gospels—gleaned in conversation with Jews and Christians—were scriptural. He admitted, quite readily, that he was just a man and that his own sayings—later collected as the *Hasid*—were just the sayings of a man, however devout. It was only as a conduit for the Word of God—for the actual suras of the Koran—that he claimed divine inspiration and—further confessed—that he was as much of a completely human bystander to the suras' revelation as were his hearers. I haven't read the *Hasid,* nor have I any intention of doing so. As, likewise, I have no intention of reading the Talmud or the *Confessions of St. Augustine.* I find Scripture itself to be more than sufficiently daunting a challenge—and a feast for the intellect—without bothering myself about someone else's fallible and human opinions of what it is that those Scriptures are saying.

How could thirteen pages go by that fast? This might be a five-parter, folks. Next issue: the Battle of Mt. Ohod, the Battle of the Ditch and Muhammad's Return to Mecca (and, hopefully, a few words about The Mothers of the Faithful—Muhammad's wives—and Aisha, indisputably, his favourite wife)

EVEN ON THE BACK COVER OF THE
FOLLOWING ISSUE
MEN (AND WOMEN!) SHALL
STILL
CALL HIM
SPORE